

No Trucks; No Glory!

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The Army questioned whether it could be done. The United States Property and Fiscal Office's Transportation section, however, never doubted that they could pack up 96 Heavy Equipment Transporter Trucks (HETs) and 220 truck loads of various types of equipment belonging to the 2-1498th Transportation Company and move it to Beaumont, Texas in less than a week.

The short fuse and urgency for moving the equipment ruled out movement by rail. In order to move the HETs by rail from Camp Roberts to Beaumont, Texas, it would have

taken two months. The Transportation Section would have had to arrange for each rail car to get in place, and it would have taken two weeks to load them, and required an additional week to move them to Beaumont, Texas, explained Chief Warrant Officer Four William O'Brien, transportation officer at the United States Property and Fiscal Office at Camp San Luis Obispo.

"The Army came to me and said that we don't think we can do it," said O'Brien. "Then the Army asked, 'Can

How do you transport nearly nine million pounds of 48-wheelers from Camp Roberts to Beaumont, Texas for shipment overseas? Anyway you can!



you do it?" With that challenge, the Army offered to pay the \$2 million costs of moving the 1498th Transportation Company's vehicles and equipment if O'Brien's shop would do the work. But the work was more than pushing paper, making phone calls, and moving trucks and tractors, it was a gigantic research puzzle of finding and retrieving the specialized trailers and cabs from

throughout the country necessary to haul the HETs.

"We called commercial trucking firms in Oregon, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina, Connecticut, Montana, and several other states," O'Brien said. "We had to find 192 cabs and trailers to move 96 HETs, and we needed to find giant cranes for loading connex boxes and other containers for carrying equipment."

O'Brien explained that the HET's trailer and cab have to be moved separately as two pieces. The HETs have 48 wheels: 40 on the trailer, and eight on the cab. The cab requires a special 52-foot flatbed with a Removal Goose Neck (RGN). An RGN, O'Brien explained, is a lowboy trailer that swivels around and down to form its own ramp. In essence, you don't need a ramp to pull the HET trailers onto the flatbed trailers because it's already included.

The Army's Transportation Section at Ft. Lewis, Washington has 10 people in its shop, compared to four at USPFO at San Luis Obispo. Only two of those individuals worked on moving the HETs and equipment: O'Brien and Beate

her workstation to do a few jumping jacks and light exercise, and, of course, drink coffee. "Failure is not an option," she said. "Fear of failure just kept me from falling asleep."

O'Brien was waiting to receive the contracted vehicles and trailers at Camp Roberts. Manned with only volunteers from the 1498th Transportation Company, O'Brien was challenged with two complex tasks: Organizing the volunteers, and deciphering how to match HET cabs and trailers with the appropriate commercial contractor.

"I go out on big moves, because if I send 192 [trailers and cabs] out there, the unit wouldn't have any idea of what to do with them," O'Brien

said. "Besides the HETs, we had to move another 28 truckloads of equipment. It required a total of 220 truckloads in addition to the HETs. We did it in four days. It's the biggest move we've ever done!"

Even more impressive when considering that the Transportation Section had everything out of Camp Roberts by April 1st, was that all the equipment was in Beaumont, Texas by April 4th. And the equipment arrived in Iraq a month before the 1498th Transportation Company. This included moving weapons, a sensitive and volatile item. O'Brien's staff had to coordinate for a National Agency Check and bond the drivers to move weapons. They also

coordinated for "constant" satellite surveillance to monitor their movement to Ft. Lewis, Washington to link up with troops.

The troops were on scene to receive the weapons, thanks to the skillful planning and synchronization talents of Debbie Fugate and Carol Forest. Fugate organized bus transportation for the nearly 400-person company from their home armories to Ft. Lewis, Washington, while Forrest arranged for commercial flights from the United States to Kuwait. The Army did the rest.

"I don't think that people realize what it takes to move the equipment," O'Brien said. 🐾



Two 90-ton cranes were contracted to lift the HET trailers onto the back of commercial trailers.

Spencer, his Transportation Assistant.

"For each piece of equipment, there is one contract," O'Brien said. "You can't focus on, or be involved with, anything else when you have to write one contract for each piece of equipment."

With that responsibility on her shoulders, Spencer worked 22 hours straight during a weekend, calling commercial vendors throughout the country, writing contracts, and directing trucks to Camp Roberts, California. She worked continuously from 7:00 a.m. on Friday, March 28 until 5:00 a.m. the next day. Spencer said that she occasionally emerged from